Digital Culture in Palestine

Developed within the framework of the project:

Re|Shaping Cultural Policies for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

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March 2022

Funded by: Government of Sweden

Report: Digital Culture in Palestine

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Introduction

The digital revolution has transformed the way in which cultural goods and services are created, produced, distributed and accessed. These changes have impacted all regions of the world, both in the Global North and South, and all cultural sectors – music, film, publishing, cultural heritage, among others. What's more, the emergence of Covid-19 and the implementation of lockdowns on a global scale have dramatically accelerated these trends.

It should be noted that the digital shift represents much more than a simple change of medium. Indeed, it represents the introduction of a new logic that reshapes every link of the cultural value chain – creation, production, distribution, access and participation – creating a sizeable impact not only on sectors that deal with cultural expressions in digital formats, but also on physical activities, such as the online sale of printed books, the use of social networks to stimulate the participation of the public in performing arts, and many others.

For stakeholders in the cultural scene – artists, cultural and creative industries (CCIs)[1], creative startups, NGOs working in cultural areas, the Ministry of Culture and other governmental units – the digital age introduces both opportunities and challenges. Some of its main advantages lie in the ability of new technologies to broaden the cultural market for the artists, increase the productivity of the CCIs and ensure that audiences have access to an increasing abundance of cultural offerings. However, in many countries the technological infrastructure can present problems, and artists and CCIs often lack the necessary knowledge to incorporate the new tools into their daily work, among many other obstacles.

Within this context of significant transformation and its marked acceleration as a result of the pandemic, it has become an urgent necessity for every country to develop its own Digital Culture strategy, formulated under a national plan aimed at facilitating the incorporation of new technologies for stakeholders, with a specified consideration for local challenges, needs and priorities. Chile[2], the UK[3] and Canada-Quebec[4] represent some notable examples among the countries that have already developed Digital Culture strategies.

In the current situation, it seems clear that a Digital Culture strategy would need to fulfill at least three conditions. Such a strategy should be:

1) flexible (applicable to any context, either to emergency circumstances such as a pandemic or to everyday conditions);
2) comprehensive (designed for all creative sectors, even for those that do not work with digital content but need support in other digital fields such as digital marketing);
3) sustainable (devised with a projection of 5 to 10 years).

The present report, prepared as part of the Re/Shaping Cultural Policies for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and the Diversity of Cultural Expressions project[5], carried out by UNESCO within the framework of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA),

[1] Throughout the report, we will use the expression "cultural and creative industries" as defined in article 4.5 of the 2005 Convention − that is, as "industries producing and distributing cultural goods or services" (UNESCO, 2005). We will include in this group a wide range of sectors, in particular music, film, publishing, visual arts, cultural heritage, performing arts and video games.
[2] https://www.cultura.gob.cl/culturadigital/
[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital
[4] http://culturenumerique.mcc.gouv.qc.ca
[5] https://en.unesco.org/creativity/activities/reshaping-cultural-policies-promotion-fundamental

intends to study the situation of digital culture in Palestine, in order to draw up a list of recommendations that the Ministry of Culture may wish to consider for the elaboration of a national digital culture strategy. In its analysis, the report closely follows the conceptual approach proposed by the Guidelines for the implementation of the 2005 Convention in the Digital Environment[6]. This tool presents great flexibility and can be adapted to the framework of any country, whatever its situation in terms of infrastructure and human development. The Guidelines summarize the efforts made by the Parties to the 2005 Convention in the last decade and, apart from the core aspects that are directly related to the cultural value chain, they incorporate other key issues, such as freedom of expression, gender equality, and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others.

Along these lines, for the purposes of this analysis, the report defines "digital culture" as any expression of culture – a cultural good, service or activity – that in at least one of its links – creation, production, distribution, consumption and participation – includes a strong digital component. This definition has the advantage of encompassing not only the work with digitally created content, for example, video games or e-books, but also other dimensions generally less explored in studies on digital culture, such as e-commerce, crowdfunding and audience development, and other phenomena that can be applied to both purely digital and physical content.

The full project began on March 17th, 2021, and has followed three stages:

1) data and information collection;
2) organization of a workshop to present the preliminary report;
3) preparation of the final report, incorporating the feedback provided during the workshop.

For the collection of data and information, we have analyzed more than 100 reports, academic documents and press articles on issues related to local culture, history, education, demographics, finance, technological infrastructure, telecommunications, and other vital areas. Additionally, the analyzed materials include the Quadrennial Periodic Reports (QPR) of the 2005 Convention submitted by Palestine in 2017[7] and 2020[8]. An online survey was also launched on May 2021, with 20 key questions about the situation of artists, cultural organizations and the public sector[9]. At the same time, we have conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from the local cultural ecosystem. The objective of these conversations was to understand the medium and long-term vision of these actors in their own words[10].

Below is a summary of the main results of this analysis, followed by a list of recommendations for the Ministry of Culture. To organize the information collected, we have adopted a structure based on the opportunities and the challenges faced by each of the three large groups of cultural actors: artists, CCIs

[6] https://en.unesco.org/creativity/publications/digital-guidelines.
[7] https://en.unesco.org/creativity/governance/periodic-reports/2017/palestina.
[8] https://en.unesco.org/creativity/governance/periodic-reports/submission/3829.
[9] The survey can be viewed here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rgPgkOJPqmjr6oaBC1E_Gs-uQDK45mW7BEcGPltd6bw. A total of 92 responses were collected. The main graphs derived from the survey can be consulted in the Annex to this report. We would like to thank the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies for authorizing the reuse of specific questions from their project *Supporting Culture in the Digital Environment* (2020) in the survey.
[10] For the survey, we sought to receive answers from different geographical origins, including the West Bank (55%), Gaza (30%), Jerusalem (14%) and the diaspora (1%). Support from the UNESCO Ramallah Office team and collaboration with the expert Nidal Kabi, who has generously shared a wealth of information, suggestions, contacts and has even worked on the translation of texts and interviews, has been vital throughout the development of the whole project.

and audiences[11], as well as the projects carried out by the public sector and other organizations[12] to meet their priorities and needs[13].

I. Artists

Opportunities

For artists, digital technologies can provide multiple benefits. These tools can help musicians, writers, and other creators reach new audiences extremely rapidly, rendering their content immediately accessible. It is worth noting that gaining visibility is of primary importance for those who work in the arts and culture sectors: 30% of the artists consulted in the survey consider this to be one of their main priorities. Along these lines, it is no coincidence that 65% of these artists consider social networks an essential technology. As a matter of fact, virtual networking constitutes an extremely powerful tool when it comes to strengthening social ties within the art scene, particularly in a context characterized by fragmentation, as is the case for Palestinians[14].

The possibility of exploring new formats and media is another way that opportunities can present themselves in this new digital environment. Indeed, 65% of the artists surveyed indicated that digital technologies enable new forms of expression and artistic experimentation. In this field, oral storytelling was mentioned by several interviewees as one of the genres with the greatest potential in the digital age.

The issue of income is equally central. In effect, 53.8% of the artists consulted rely on grants for their artistic activity. If we take into account the fact that digital technologies can contribute to finding new sources of income for creators, it is logical that a large number of respondents – almost 50% – consider crowdfunding a key opportunity. Indeed, platforms such as KickStarter and Patreon, among many others, today help thousands of artists around the world receive funding for their creative work. On the other hand, as some interviewees pointed out, online teaching has also been an economic alternative for many artists whose income fell sharply as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

In the specific field of arts education, several interviewees highlighted the fact that there are excellent universities in Palestine. These institutions constitute a key space for the training of future creators and for the shaping of a vibrant digital culture ecosystem.

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[11] It is true that in the digital era the boundaries between each of these groups of actors can become fluid, since thanks to new technologies, artists can become entrepreneurs, and amateur spectators can also become artists, etc. Nevertheless, we consider that for the purposes of the presentation, the division remains analytically useful, in particular because it reflects the structure provided in the Guidelines, which follows the different links of the value chain – creation (artists), production and distribution (CCIs), and access and participation (audiences).

[12] It should also be noted that most of these projects usually involve more than one group of actors: for example, an initiative carried out by a cultural NGO to deliver e-books to the general public could be included both in the sections corresponding to CCIs and audiences. For the sake of simplicity, the inclusion of each initiative in one section or another will depend on which group is benefiting the most from it: using the example of the e-books, if the content is delivered for free, the initiative has a much greater impact on the audience than on the organization that distributes it. As far as cultural heritage is concerned, it is worth noting that the 2005 Convention does not provide a detailed treatment of this theme, but we have still incorporated it into the analysis due to its relevance in the Palestinian context. The theme is discussed in the section dedicated to audiences, since digitization can allow the public to access national cultural heritage in new ways. For the purposes of this analysis, we have not included aspects related to the impact of digital technologies on the press or the educational sector, as these topics go beyond the scope of this project.

[13] It is worth noting that the following analysis does not aim to provide an exhaustive picture of the state of digital culture in Palestine, but rather to present a summary of trends and case studies that could facilitate the elaboration of a national digital culture strategy, following the valuable framework provided by the Guidelines for the implementation of the 2005 Convention in the Digital Environment. For the sake of brevity, we have chosen to avoid historical introductions and to focus directly on digital culture issues. Regarding the bibliography, we have only included essential references in the text: at the end of the report, the reader will be able to find a list citing the main texts utilized. Finally, in the case of quotes, if the reference is not provided, it is because they are derived from personal interviews or from responses obtained in the survey.

[14] Cf. Slitine (2016).

Furthermore, digital tools can help women – traditionally marginalized in some creative sectors – unleash their creative potential. The same opportunity can be found among younger artists, as the founder of a Gaza-based NGO observes:

> *"It is clear that the future is for digital technology. We are dealing with young people who are digital citizens, so we must focus on activities and programs that take care of their digital inclinations. Creative digital productions are an effective way to express the youth's talents and cultural and artistic creations, as well as an opportunity to network and communicate with the wider world".*

Moreover, according to several interviewees, digital tools can help artists from conflict zones continue working and communicating with their audience despite many of the difficulties that they may face. Indeed, the 2020 Palestine QPR makes clear that, while it is nearly impossible for artists and art practitioners to travel outside of Gaza, this issue may be partially addressed through the creation of virtual communication tools.

Challenges

Despite all of the benefits listed above, for artists, the new environment also involves several challenges. While it is true that the digital age enables increased visibility, the amount of content competing for the user's attention today is of such magnitude that if the creators have not mastered specific advanced techniques, their ability to disseminate their work is greatly reduced. In fact, many interviewees felt that they lacked adequate knowledge about audience building and digital marketing, among other topics. A film director and screenwriter from Gaza observes:

> *"I have many ideas, but the main question that keeps repeating in my head is: if my work goes on YouTube, I would need to 'beg' for likes and views! I don't manage the art of online marketing".*

The digital age requires continuous learning in the fields of communication and experimentation. Mahmood Jrere – a Palestinian hip hop artist and co-founder of the Palestine Music Expo (PMX) and Palestine Music Office (PMO) – describes the difficulty of the situation as such:

> *"This year, we had Covid, but who knows what we could have next year? We need to be ready and face any problem and never stop learning and expanding our knowledge, this is like a fight for survival"[15].*

Therefore, although technologies can facilitate virtual networking, it is not always easy for local artists to build a solid network of contacts, especially at an international level. An interviewee goes so far as to affirm:

> *"We don't ask for help. We ask for connections!"*

The advent of the digital age can also pose a threat to many artists. As we witnessed during the Covid-19 crisis, thousands of creators lost the possibility of performing and remained unemployed for several months. It is true that tools such as Zoom and YouTube, among others, allowed many artists to find new ways of communicating with their public and find new sources of income, either thanks to online performances or to online teaching, but for many the situation is much more complex. For most artists, undertaking a full digital conversion of their practice can be extremely demanding. Moreover, as several musicians and art performers warned in the survey, it is not always possible to digitize work primarily designed for an analog environment. One interviewee from Gaza puts it very clearly:

> *"We are not robots. Live theater cannot ever be replaced, even if we had the best platform".*

Another expert from Jerusalem adds:

> *"There are specific types of workshops and meetings that can use digital platforms as a tool. But I do not think that artistic performances should be organized digitally, as they lose their atmosphere and beauty".*

In the specific case of online workshops, a professor from the Edward Said National Conservatory explains that the migration of music courses to a virtual format considerably worsened the experience of teaching and providing artistic feedback, since neither the teacher nor the students are able to

[15] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0vmXFweVUo

accurately hear and identify the sounds on the other side of the screen. Furthermore, this challenge was aggravated by the lack of training among teachers on how to use digital tools in a comprehensive manner.

Another problem repeatedly pointed out by those interviewed is the lack of equipment, which affects individual artists as well as institutions providing education in the arts. The lack of 4G, both in Gaza and the West Bank, only exacerbates this problem.[16] The aid provided by international organizations for the incorporation of equipment and digital infrastructure in cultural projects does not ultimately remove these obstacles, since, according to several people consulted, these initiatives are usually short-term. In this regard, a researcher observes:

> *"Culture is a process, not a humanitarian issue!".*

Moreover, many interviewees coincided on the point that the censorship mechanisms implemented by Internet platforms can affect both artists and more general users who express themselves through social networks[17].

As we have seen, the leap into the digital age can leave creators belonging to certain social sectors out of the game. A representative of the Ministry of Culture warns:

> *"Technology is no longer an option, but a vital tool. However, older writers very often lack basic digital skills. They urgently need a systematic plan that helps them incorporate these tools into their daily work".*

Finally, the fair remuneration of artists and the respect for intellectual property constitute some other key challenges. It is worth mentioning that creators do not always receive a significant income from the reproduction of their works on online streaming services[18]. In the specific case of crowdfunding, many of the interviewees found that in order to benefit from participatory funding, artistic knowledge is not enough: every artist interested in this modality is expected to master storytelling and other digital skills in order to attract and engage potential contributors. Moreover, 47.2% of those interviewed expressed concern about the protection of copyright in the digital age. A musician, for example, recalled that some countries and international organizations do not recognize the Palestinian State as such, which makes the work of local creators more difficult when it comes to working with collective management societies and earning royalties.

Projects

In this context fraught with both opportunities and challenges, the public and the private sectors, as well as the civil society, have launched a considerable number of initiatives to strengthen the situation of artists in the digital environment.

First, we should mention the wide range of projects aimed at consolidating skills, experimentation and networking. Within the framework of the U40 Empowered, UNESCO-Sabrina Ho program launched with the support of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), the Women Audio Visual Education (WAVE)[19] initiative offered a technology-based training program developed by Ayyam Al Masrah (Theater Day Productions) in 2019, combining digital animation, drama and storytelling to develop creative and technical skills in young Palestinian women. Thanks to these sessions conducted by international specialists, young women from Gaza learned to create short videos with their smartphones, work with communities, and turn improvisation, character analysis and development into new digital content.

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[16] Due to the restrictions introduced by the Israeli authorities, Gaza only has 2G, while the West Bank has access to 3G, but not to 4G (cf. Sawafta, 2018). More information about connectivity – especially related to smartphones – can be found in the section devoted to the audiences (III).

[17] We will also deal with this topic in section III.

[18] In recent years the problem of the "value gap" has become central. The value gap is the difference between the revenues received by rights holders from the exploitation of their intellectual property by online platforms, such as YouTube, and the value that those platforms receive from exploiting such content. See for example Sutherland (2018).

[19] https://es.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/women-audio-visual-education-wave

Between May 2018 and April 2019, Theater Day Productions also organized the New Audiovisual Society, by Women… for Women initiative[20], with the support of SouthMed WiA, with the goal of training rising female artists to become Arab pioneers in the audio-visual sector, fostering gender equality and promoting women's participation in society and the audiovisual landscape. According to a representative from Theater Day Productions, these projects have had an extremely positive impact, to the point that some participants submitted their films to international festivals, and one even won. As she points out, the access to digital training and the exchange with international specialists is vital:

> *"Artists need to be inspired. In Gaza they are very talented. They find inspiration in anything. If they feel poor or suffocated, they feel connected with the world when they connect with international experts".*

7amleh / The Arab Center for Social Media Advancement[21], an NGO aimed at enabling Palestinian and Arab civil society organizations to effectively utilize tools for digital advocacy, together with the Arab Culture Association, organized a workshop in June 2020 about Digital Marketing for Artists[22]. Likewise, in October 2019, the Center and the Deutsche Welle Akademie held training sessions on digital storytelling for 25 activists, bloggers and content creators, focusing on how to produce digital stories and deal with mobile applications in the fields of audio, video and image[23]. Similarly, the Palestine Music Expo has founded an artist academy[24] in which musicians from all over the MENA region can learn good practices on topics such as online audience building and music production with digital tools. Furthermore, as part of its Visual Art Program, the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center (KSCC) organized the Comics Project[25] in 2020 to raise awareness of the value of digital comics by helping artists develop their skills in this field.

In recent years – and in particular since the pandemic − one of the priorities of the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM) has been to enhance its production program through digital means. The conservatory has been increasingly allocating resources to the creation of video publications for its students and teachers in order to sustain its activities in a time characterized by the lack of live concerts. Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts and Culture[26], for its part, implemented intensive training sessions for all of its teachers, trainers and students in order for them to be able to interact online.

In the field of virtual art exhibitions, we wish to highlight the work done by Shababeek for Contemporary Art, a non-profit art space that was established in 2009 by young professional artists. Their online exhibitions[27] make visible the creations of Palestinian artists residing in Gaza. In a similar vein, KSCC also organized a Digital Exhibition entitled Artist at Work in June 2020.

As detailed in the 2020 QPR, the Ministry of Culture has been carrying out numerous measures to support artists in the new environment for several years such as digital photography contests, online art exhibitions and the publication of videos by local creators. During the pandemic, more than 500 artists and writers benefited from a special program aimed at supporting individual young artists and writers who lost their jobs as a result of the cancellation of shows and the accelerated digitization accompanying the lockdown. The Ministry also launched two creative competitions; one targeting professional artists and the other targeting children, who were invited to digitally present the works they created during the quarantine. As a result, 250 winners received financial prizes. All these interventions contributed to improving the situation of local artists during the lockdown and gave opportunities to artists from different cities to come together to take part in these activities[28].

As far as artist remuneration and intellectual property are concerned, in spite of the aforementioned difficulties, some interviewees explained that several Palestinian musicians are joining forces to register with the French Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music (SACEM)[29]. Furthermore, the

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[20] http://www.smedwia.eu/en/new-audiovisual-society
[21] https://7amleh.org
[22] https://7amleh.org/2020/07/12/7amleh-and-the-arab-culture-association-hold-workshop-about-digital-marketing-for-artists.
[23] https://7amleh.org/2018/10/09/7amleh-center-concludes-training-in-digital-storytelling.
[24] https://www.palestinemusicexpo.com/artist-academy-2
[25] https://sakakini.org/comics-project/?lang=en
[26] https://www.daralkalima.edu.ps
[27] https://shababek.guccpal.org/vu_ex.php.
[28] The Ministry has also organized numerous activities to accompany the CCIs and the audiences, which will be presented in the following sections.
[29] https://www.sacem.fr/en.

Copyrights and Related Rights Law – also known as the Intellectual Property Law – has been submitted by the Ministry of Culture to the Cabinet of Ministers and is now pending final endorsement by the President.

Last but not least, it is important to acknowledge the great advances made in the field of participatory funding. A prominent case is that of Buildpalestine[30], a project that "connects individuals making an impact within their communities with those looking to support innovative ideas", through crowdfunding platforms. In the cultural field, Buildpalestine has helped several local artists launch crowdfunding campaigns via IndieGoGo, GoFundMe or LaunchGood. Buildpalestine has managed to collect over US$ 500,000 and has supported, for example, the Palestine Youth Orchestra in raising funds for its 2019 European tour[31].

II. Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)

Opportunities

For CCIs, the advantages of the new environment are manifold. First, as in the case of the artists, digital tools allow creative entrepreneurs and cultural organizations to explore new markets and connect with new audiences. For private companies, this can lead to higher revenue generation, while for non-profit institutions, new technological possibilities can lead to greater impact.

The dizzying growth of followers on social networks during the lockdown was, for many organizations, a sign of these enormous possibilities. If we take the Tamer Institute[32], a Palestinian NGO working in the field of reading, writing and all forms of cultural expressions among children and young adults, its audience went from 30,000 fans to more than 120,000 in just a few months. According to Haneen Khairi, program manager at the Institute, for cultural organizations, nothing will be the same after the pandemic:

> *"Technology and digital tools will be more present in our lives, and the way we use these tools will also be very different. The beginning of the Covid-19 crisis was a period of experimentation and training with these different tools to see how the public interacts with them. I think we became more aware of how to use these different platforms and social media. Nothing can replace field work and physical contact with people, but all this is a new experience, a trial period of new tools to communicate with the public at home"[33].*

Haneen Saleh, a representative from the Palestinian Museum[34], an independent non-profit organization based in Birzeit, underlines that the digital shift has not only enabled the Museum to allow more visitors to its collections but also to attract participants in its other virtual activities:

> *"We have noticed that online conferences were a hit, a lot more than the exhibitions were. The number of people attending the conferences was much higher than the Museum's visitors, which was a huge indicator to us".*

The increase is not only quantitative but also qualitative, since now the Museum has an impact beyond the local scene:

> *"Those who attended the art workshops, for example, were children and families both from inside and outside Palestine who had difficulties coming to the museum before. Participants came from Salfit, Bahrain and many other places"[35].*

It must be recognized that for Palestinian CCIs, the Arab region constitutes a sizeable potential market. This idea is stressed by Imam Hithnawi, founder and CEO of Flow[36], an incubator based in Ramallah:

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30 https://www.buildpalestine.com.
31 https://www.buildpalestine.com/project/the-palestine-youth-orchestra-is-coming-to-europe.
32 https://www.tamerinst.org.
33 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iv9ligbWGss.
34 https://www.palmuseum.org.
35 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dK2AwnxdvYA.
36 https://flow.ps.

> *"It's a valuable and massive market, with approximately 380 million people sharing the same language and similar consumer behavior […]. In Egypt, there are 40 million people in a single city! So, the entire world is looking at the Middle East as an attractive market"*[37].

As we pointed out in the case of the artists, the possibility of reaching new audiences may imply the generation of new income for CCIs, either through direct sales or through crowdfunding. Interestingly, one interviewee based in Ramallah, with vast experience in participatory funding, suggests that for local cultural organizations, the latter option could allow the shift from donor dependency to individual support.

The significant opportunities offered by the Arabic-language market have been increasingly explored by Palestinian startups in the last decade. According to Mohammed al-Madhoun, co-founder of Baskalet, a mobile gaming studio based in Gaza, understanding the consumers' mindsets in the region is a clear asset for any Palestinian startup:

> *"Lots of online games exist, but they're mostly built around American culture. We've had great user acquisition because we tap into the fact that Arabs want games they can relate to".*

The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA)[38] comprises more than 150 major ICT companies in Palestine's emerging technology and startup ecosystem. When asked about the competitive advantages of Palestinian tech ventures, a representative from PITA explained that local companies have a time zone close to Europe, good skills in different IT languages, good English language skills, and proximity to other countries with a strong startup landscape that they can learn from.

A World Bank report published in 2018[39] considers that the presence of talented people and in particular highly educated founders are also fundamental strengths of the Palestinian startup scene. Furthermore, the West Bank and Gaza startup scene has one of the largest participation rates of female entrepreneurs in the world. In fact, women are more active in the startup ecosystem in Palestine (23% of startups led by female entrepreneurs) than in Beirut (19%) and New York (12%)[40].

If the participation of young people is a constant in almost all startup ecosystems in the world, for many interviewees in Palestine youth entrepreneurship is a must. Indeed, in the fourth quarter of 2019 unemployment among young people stood at 37% in Palestine as a whole, and at 61% in Gaza alone. Additionally, more than 3,000 IT students graduate every year from Palestinian universities, and most of them do not have a job[41]. This situation pushes many young people to explore options in the technology market, which can further accelerate this digital transformation.

This critical mass of entrepreneurs and startups will undoubtedly contribute positively to the formation of a more vibrant digital culture ecosystem. What's more, many entrepreneurs who work in animation and with other interactive techniques seem willing to collaborate in the implementation of national programs, as suggested by an interviewee in charge of a digital hub. For the CCIs and the Ministry of Culture, these collaborations can be invaluable when it comes to carrying out digital culture initiatives.

Challenges

In order to consolidate the digital transformation of CCIs, a considerable number of issues still need to be addressed. First, as is the case for many artists, it is urgent for creative entrepreneurs and cultural organizations to reinforce their skills in key digital areas, for example the design and management of their institutional websites. In fact, one interviewee regrets that several of the country's cultural organizations have websites that seem to have been designed 20 years ago: many of these pages take a long time to load and lack any type of interaction. Additionally, the advanced use of social networking tools is crucial to increasing the online visibility of Palestinian CCIs. Likewise, it is vital for them learn more about how to collect and analyze online metrics.

However, pure digital training on its own may not be enough. Indeed, 47.8% of all the respondents in the survey state that they also need expert advice. It is worth noting that the shortage of mentors is

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[37] Sune (2020).
[38] http://home.pita.ps/wp.
[39] World Bank (2018).
[40] Idem (p. 10)
[41] World Bank (2020).

precisely one of the key challenges identified by the World Bank report on the startup scene in the West Bank and Gaza[42].

The digital age does not imply a simple change of medium or format – rather, it requires a profound transformation in our ways of working. Therefore, for Palestinian CCIs it is essential today more than ever to develop their capacities in research and development (R&D). An interviewee observed that most of the Palestinian cultural organizations that have carried out digital projects in the last few years have done so with the same mentality as that with which they used to implement offline projects. But this is not sufficient, as one Ramallah-based Palestinian expert on culture and urban development suggests:

> *"You are not competing with the local scene only, but with the world. Therefore, you need high standards. Otherwise, how can you compare with the Tate?"*

In addition to the lack of skills, expert advice and R&D, another of the challenges pointed out by creative entrepreneurs and cultural organizations is related to the lack of equipment and infrastructure.

Overall, the main obstacle to the digital transformation of CCIs seems to be funding-related. For 73.6% of the CCIs representatives that participated in the survey, lack of funding is the key barrier obstructing the growth of the digital culture ecosystem in Palestine. In this regard, the challenges faced for years by startups in Palestine in some ways anticipate the problems that CCIs will likely encounter in the future. For local startups, it can be difficult to attract investments due to the difficulty of transferring money from abroad, among other reasons. This is partly because many main global payment gateways such as PayPal are not available in Palestine. This hinders the consolidation of a digital market as well as potential expansion into other countries. In August 2016, a group comprising 43 Palestinian companies and NGOs published an open letter to PayPal[43], requesting the platform to allow the use of its services. As the letter explains, the stakes are significant:

> *"Without access to PayPal, Palestinian entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and others face routine difficulties in receiving payments for business and charitable purposes. Moreover, PayPal's absence is problematic for the overall Palestinian economy, as tech is one of the only sectors with the potential to grow".*

While crowdfunding can constitute an alternative means of financing until the issue of payment gateways is resolved, it is not usually possible to bring the collected money into the country. And even if a way is found to do so, there are still barriers in this field: as is the case among artists, for CCIs to take advantage of crowdfunding, they need an international network, marketing tools and specific skills.

Last but not least, many interviewees warn that for creative entrepreneurs and cultural organizations in Palestine, working with digital technologies should not be seen as a panacea, but as one option among others. As the representative of a cultural institution in Gaza expresses:

> *"I am angry when I see that donors say that digital skills can be the solution to unemployment in Gaza. Human rights for movement and freedom cannot be replaced. It's a decision of the user to use digital tools. But it should be a free decision".*

Projects

In recent years, numerous institutions – both public and private – have launched support programs for Palestinian entrepreneurs and startups, which directly or indirectly contribute to the digital transformation of the CCIs. These initiatives generally offer:

- training in digital skills, both for existing companies and for individual freelancers who aspire to establish startups in the future;
- incubation and acceleration opportunities;
- access to mentors and professional networks;
- funding.

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[42] World Bank (2018, p. 17).

[43] https://techcrunch.com/2016/09/09/paypal-brushes-off-request-from-palestinian-tech-firms-to-access-the-platform.

What follows is a selected list of programs launched in these areas, many of which place special emphasis on reinforcing the creative sectors:

- Code for Palestine[44]: project introduced in 2015 with the financial backing of the PalTel Group Foundation, with the aim of teaching coding and entrepreneurial skills to high school students throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- GGateway[45]: IT outsourcing women-led impact business, established in Gaza, which also offers various courses on digital topics.
- Flow[46]: one-stop shop for skills, resources, and networks for Palestinian entrepreneurs.
- TechnoPark[47]: non-profit research and innovation park aimed at supporting the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Palestine. It was established in 2016 as a joint project between Birzeit University and the Palestine Tech Forum. In 2017, TechnoPark launched its Creative Cluster Campus (CCC)[48], supported by the United Nations Development (UNDP DEEP Program) and funded by the Islamic Development Bank, with the goal of creating jobs and opportunities in sectors such as arts and crafts, fashion, video and cinema, photography, music, visual and theater arts, publishing, computer games, and virtual reality, among others.
- Fikra Paltel Innovation Hub[49]: creative space for entrepreneurs with innovative ideas who need access to physical infrastructure, capacity building, and mentoring.
- Gaza Sky Geeks[50]: startup accelerator launched in Gaza in 2011, with the backing of the global humanitarian organization Mercy Corps and Google. It offers coding skills programs, digital training for freelancers, and a startup academy that facilitates access to global mentors, among other advantages. Half of the startup founders supported by Gaza Sky Geeks are female.
- Ibtikar Fund[51]: initiative created by the Bank of Palestine together with other partners, with the aim of investing in Palestinian early-stage innovative ventures and, through a network of experienced mentors, enabling those companies to grow. Among the companies in its portfolio is Play3Arabi[52], a mobile games publisher whose mission is "to bring high quality games to more than 300 million Arabic speakers".
- Al Jabal / The Mountain[53]: social business incubator that seeks to help young men and women build capacities in the field of entrepreneurship and gain access to professional networks. It supports a wide range of sectors, including video game development, as in the case of Seren Bit Studio.
- Pal-Lancer[54]: joint project between DROSOS Foundation[55] and the University College of Applied Sciences Technology Incubator (UCASTI)[56] aiming to provide young entrepreneurs in Gaza with training and mentorship in disciplines such as design, media, writing, programming, sales and many others.
- Jafra Project[57]: project carried out by Drosos Foundation and Tabe3 Jafra Al Fanny for Production and Promotion, with the objective of promoting the creation of startups in the music industry and generating economic opportunities. It also develops the "Gazelle" electronic library (music, video clips, documentaries, research and publications) and intends to become a key interface for the local music industry.
- Promoting Startups in Cultural and Creative Industries in Palestine: program implemented with the support of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) and the Leaders International organization[58], to reinforce Palestine's CCIs through the creation of startups and new models of entrepreneurship, leading to the empowerment of local cultural entrepreneurs.

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44 https://paltelfoundation.ps/posts/view/8911/Code_for_Palestine&lang=1.
45 https://www.ggateway.tech.
46 https://flow.ps.
47 https://www.technopark.ps.
48 https://www.technopark.ps/en/article/204/Creative-Cluster-Campus-(CCC).
49 https://www.fikra.ps.
50 https://gazaskygeeks.com.
51 https://ibtikarfund.com.
52 https://www.play3arabi.com.
53 https://aljabal.ps.
54 https://drosos.org/en/projekte/pal-lancer.
55 https://drosos.org.
56 www.ucasti.ps.
57 https://drosos.org/en/projekte/jafra.
58 https://leadersinternational.org.

To this list we should add another fundamental milestone: the creation of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship in 2019. As a startup unit within the government, its goal is to nurture a resilient and sustainable innovation ecosystem, by supporting training, better access to knowledge, network-building, and finance.

III. Audiences

Opportunities

From the audience's point of view, the advantages of the digital age are clear: 68.5% of those interviewed agree that new technologies enable a broader access to culture. According to data from We are Social from February 2021[59], there are 3.65 million Internet users (70.6% of the population) in Palestine, of which 98.8% access the web from their mobile phones. Several interviewees underscored the fact that even the poorest families own several smartphones, which are key devices for consuming multimedia content. Indeed, according to 2019 data provided by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)[60], more than 86% of households own at least one of these devices. It should be added that, during the Covid-19 crisis, digital tools were one of the few avenues available for the Palestinian population to access culture.

Both the 2017 and 2020 QPRs consider that interaction with the diaspora − one of the strategic goals of cultural policy − can be achieved more easily thanks to new technologies. Along these lines, the representative of a cultural foundation based in Ramallah observed that, even before the pandemic, for the inhabitants of the diaspora, digital tools constituted a privileged means to attend art exhibitions, book launches and other cultural activities organized by local actors.

For the general user, the digital environment can not only provide access to forms of cultural expressions but also facilitate participation and interaction with artists and cultural organizations. It is important to keep in mind that in Palestine there are 3.1 million active users of social networks (60.1% of the population). In this context, it is no coincidence that 60% of respondents from all sectors consider social networks to be a key tool in the cultural scene. Among the people consulted, the most used networks were Facebook (91.3%), Instagram (79.3%) and YouTube (76.1%). Another aspect pointed out by some interviewees was that, given that cultural access and participation can contribute to peace building, greater audience engagement in online artistic activities can be a positive element.

Likewise, as observed by some experts consulted, including some from the Ministry of Culture, digital formats such as e-books will become increasingly popular, due to their advantages in certain contexts. Audiobooks can also be an attractive option for children as well as for users with visual impairments.

Furthermore, 39.1% of those interviewed consider that new technologies play a key role in the field of cultural heritage. In effect, whether for the digitization of historical materials or for their communication, digital tools have proven essential.

Challenges

For the public, infrastructural deficiencies can pose many problems. For millions of users in Gaza and the West Bank, the lack of 4G makes it difficult to access cultural expressions online. As several interviewees point out, the digital gap can also leave out many inhabitants of rural areas who have reduced access to technologies. Furthermore, there is the risk that older generations − who may have more difficulties using these tools − become alienated from cultural participation.

The challenge pointed out in the case of the CCIs with respect to the difficulty of transferring an analog artistic experience to a digital environment also affects audiences. Indeed, as noted by a public sector

[59] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-palestine.
[60] https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang__en/881/default.aspx.

representative, a mere format migration without added digital value often results in a poor user experience and frustration among consumers.

Another challenge is related to the issues posed by limited banking rates (25%, according to We Are Social data) and low use of credit cards (3%) − elements that are essential for the consumption of cultural goods and services online.

In the field of cultural heritage, institutions that archive materials of historical value often lack the know-how and technology − scanners, open-source software, etc. − to carry out digitization and subsequent promotion to the public. Furthermore, carrying out a centralized digitization policy at the national level can be demanding in terms of time and resources.

Finally, several organizations expressed their concern about barriers to free expression and free access to cultural content on the web. As several interviewees warned, the algorithms of large Internet platforms establish non-transparent restrictions on which publications will be available to the local public. Online harassment and cyberbullying are other recurring problems. According to a research report published by 7amleh in October 2019, *Silenced Networks: The Chilling Effect among Palestinian Youth in Social Media*[61], many young Palestinians have had their content removed from online platforms or have experienced harassment. A previous report by 7amleh (November 2018), *A Violent Network: Gender Based Violence against Palestinian Women Online*[62], warns that cyberbullying has produced a "Secondary Chilling Effect" affecting women in particular.

Projects

Despite the obstacles, the public sector, private companies and civil society organizations have carried out numerous initiatives to promote access and cultural participation among all social groups in the digital environment.

As reflected in the latest QPR, in 2020 the Ministry of Culture coordinated the Talat Thaqafia program, which delivered artistic content on different virtual platforms and attracted thousands to every session. During the Holy month of Ramadan, 17 singers presented their folklore songs for 2 hours each day through the social networks of the Ministry, and a special theatre program for children live streaming 25 plays was introduced. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture organized online art exhibitions. All these initiatives were of clear benefit to audiences within Palestine and even to those in the diaspora.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the Ministry of Education, for its part, developed a National Response Plan with the support of the UNESCO Office in Ramallah along with key education partners including UNRWA, Save the Children, and UNICEF, to support distance learning and ensure the provision of education through TV broadcasts and the Internet. An e-platform will enable students, teachers, parents, and school principals to post their feedback regarding shared material, serve as a discussion space, and allow users, mainly children, to express themselves[63]. This will have a positive and lasting impact on access to cultural expressions and participation in the digital age.

According to several interviewees, cities today play a key role in bringing cultural content closer to audiences. The city of Ramallah multiplied its online events during the pandemic, especially for children. It also developed digital programming for older adults through YouTube. The city takes part in several international networks – UCLG, Creative Cities, Resilient Cities, Smart Cities, Twin Cities, among others − where digital culture issues are afforded increasing importance.

Likewise, cultural organizations and other civil society institutions have managed to improve access to high quality digital content and foster the involvement of the public, often using simple and low-cost tools. Al Harah Theater in Beit Jala, for example, undertook a web series called *Baranda 97* in 2020, which consisted of short episodes that were filmed in an outdoor location of balconies with two neighbors that had contradicting characters. The episodes showcased certain aspects of life under

[61] https://7amleh.org/2019/10/20/silenced-net-the-chilling-effect-among-palestinian-youth-in-social-media.
[62] https://7amleh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Report_GBV_-_KtK.pdf.
[63] https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-supports-distance-learning-implement-national-response-plan-ministry-education-palestine.

lockdown. The series was broadcasted on their social media and, as can be seen in the user comments, was very well received by the public, reaching over 25,000 people[64]. Likewise, Theater Day Productions in Gaza has ventured into the transmission of interactive drama and animation episodes on its social media pages. The results have been overwhelming: more than 100,000 viewers over the course of four days.

It is worth highlighting the substantial demand for children's content among Palestinian users. The most visited YouTube channel in Palestine is Fozi Mozi[65], which has almost 9 million subscribers and offers clips containing songs, sketches, news and other cultural and educational material for children. Several cultural organizations have created their own digital programming to offer content and activities for this specific audience. The Tamer Institute, for example, has developed a series of interactive activities that gained momentum during the pandemic. For example, they invited children to send recorded clips recounting how they were spending their time at home. Theater Day Productions, meanwhile, set up an online theater program for children on social media, in cooperation with UNRWA schools. The video performances were viewed by more than 10,000 users who left over 1,000 comments. Likewise, Burj Al-Luqluq Social Center Society, based in Jerusalem, launched a collection of online stories through its social networks in late 2020 which reached more than 100,000 views and shares within a week[66]. Around the same time, Filmlab Palestine (FLP) presented its platform Waqtona[67], which broadcasts free quality content for children and their families, including films dubbed into Arabic. In addition, the non-profit organization Art to Heart[68] has developed virtual puppet episodes and other online activities to encourage cultural engagement of children with disabilities through art.

In the field of public awareness of culture in the digital environment, the Institut Français (IF)[69] has coordinated a large number of activities. Among such efforts are Digital November[70], a festival celebrating digital arts and culture, and The Invisible Link[71], a platform for interactive discussion about Palestinian and French CCIs developed in collaboration with the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center and other organizations.

Regarding cultural heritage, numerous institutions have made progress both in digitizing their collections and making them available to the public. In 2019, the Palestinian Museum launched its Digital Archive (PMDA)[72], an open-access, regularly updateable database, documenting photographs, films, audio, paper documents, books, and other materials, and preserving them from loss, damage or expropriation. During the pandemic, the Museum offered virtual exhibits as well as interactive sessions allowing the public to preserve their archives and share their family albums[73]. Khazaeen[74], another independent institution based in Jerusalem, has since 2016 gathered a rich digital archive made up of newspapers, magazines, films, photographs and other historical materials from Palestine and the Arab region. Furthermore, as pointed out in the 2020 QPR, the Ministry of Culture is working on a centralized repository that will compile verbal heritage, popular tales, and songs.

In the field of freedom of expression, free access to cultural content and the protection of fundamental rights on the Internet, UNESCO has worked with the Palestinian Center for Media, Research and Development (MADA)[75] to empower young people and build active citizens and community leaders and

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[64] The episodes can be viewed from this link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiwwiRWnrtl0RnadYcKHQbUq2J66zRz46.
[65] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb9PvQ2Gv9FDIlwZubVgTaQ.
[66] http://www.burjalluqluq.org/home/project/burj-al-luqluq-releases-salloum-is-stronger-than-corona-100-thousand-views-and-shares-within-a-week.
[67] www.waqtona.flp.ps.
[68] https://arttoheart.ps.
[69] https://www.institutfrancais-jerusalem.org/ramallah.
[70] https://openagenda.com/agendas/6044007/embeds/57208232/events/35976178?oaq%5Bpassed%5D=1&oaq%5Border%5D=latest&lang=fr
[71] https://invisible-link.ps.
[72] https://palarchive.org.
[73] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b0bERKDSNI.
[74] https://khazaaen.org/en.
[75] https://www.madacenter.org/en.

fight against hate speech and extremism[76]. Additionally, institutions such as 7amleh have carried out dozens of awareness campaigns against gender-based violence online[77] and in favor of Palestinian digital rights[78].

[76] https://en.unesco.org/news/empowering-youth-palestine-fight-online-violent-extremisms-and-radicalization.
[77] See for example: https://7amleh.org/2019/12/16/palestinian-influencers-awareness-raising-campaign-against-gender-based-violence-online.
[78] See for example: https://7amleh.org/2020/12/16/open-letter-to-facebook-twitter-and-youtube-stop-silencing-critical-voices-from-the-middle-east-and- north-africa

Conclusion and Recommendations

As can be seen from the analysis, the Palestinian digital culture scene shows great richness and dynamism. Despite the considerable challenges, the opportunities are significant. In recent years, the public sector, private players, and civil society organizations have launched innumerable projects to accompany local cultural actors − artists, CCIs, and audiences − in the incorporation of new technologies.

For the sake of organization and clarity, the great variety of challenges, opportunities and success stories outlined above can be grouped into a number of thematic axes, which are transversal to all cultural actors:

1. A first theme regards the reinforcement of digital **skills**.
2. We must also note the importance of digital preservation and dissemination of **cultural heritage**, as well as the search for greater **visibility of contemporary creations**.
3. Another key axis covers **sustainable development** issues, such as the consolidation of technological infrastructure and the economic viability of cultural organizations in the digital environment.
4. Since the digital age implies a logic based on the notion of collaboration, the implementation of **new partnerships at the national level** constitutes a potential fourth axis.
5. Taken beyond national borders, the idea of collaboration typical of the digital context also requires **new forms of international cooperation**.
6. Likewise, we must mention the need to protect and promote **fundamental rights in the digital environment**, in particular freedom of expression, privacy and gender equality.
7. Lastly, we must recognize the importance of strengthening the **cultural data ecosystem** in the new technological environment.

In the coming years, it may be beneficial for the Ministry of Culture to envisage the possibility of setting up an internal digital culture unit in order to coordinate the work to be carried out in these key areas. In the next section, we present a set of recommendations that the Ministry of Culture may wish to consider when working in these fields:

I) Skills, Experimentation, and Digital Creativity

- Work with all relevant stakeholders − from civil society, private sector, and other governmental units − to facilitate the availability of courses on digital skills for all cultural actors (artists, CCIs, cultural NGOs, audiences), at both basic and advanced levels:
    - Basic:
        - general digital literacy
        - current trends in digital culture
        - introductory social media skills
        - how to identify fake news
        - how to work with recommendation algorithms
        - fighting cyberbullying and gender-based online harassment
        - protecting privacy in the digital environment
    - Advanced:
        - digital production tools for each cultural sector (music, film, publishing, etc.)
        - advanced social media tools (ads, marketing campaigns, etc.)
        - protecting intellectual property in the new environment
        - web design
        - coding
        - live digital performances
        - digital archiving and metadata
        - 3D animation
        - mobile app development
        - artificial intelligence
        - augmented reality

        - virtual reality
        - cybersecurity
        - web analytics
        - audience development
        - business models in the digital age
        - cashflow projection
        - digital storytelling
        - taxes related to digital services
        - legal issues
        - cultural data
        - e-campaigns
        - crowdfunding
        - internal communications
        - branding
        - project management software
        - CRM software
- Foster the creation of a network of digital culture experts from Palestine and abroad that could be hired (either by the Ministry of Culture, by cultural organizations or by international NGOs) to teach basic and advanced digital skills.
- Consider recruiting technical employees to help promote culture and the creative sector as a whole in the digital environment.
- Introduce mentorship and coaching opportunities for artists and creative entrepreneurs.
- Foster the experimentation with new formats and technologies, for example via cultural hackathons, bootcamps, etc.
- Support the work of local incubators, hubs and other programs for creative entrepreneurs.
- Promote the creation of a digital culture incubator or hub, devoted to digital arts and digital creativity.
- Consider the possibility of awarding national prizes for digital culture.
- Explore the potential of e-books, audiobooks and podcasts, especially taking into account that the use of mobile phones is widespread in Palestinian society.

II) Cultural Heritage and Discoverability

- Promote the digitization of the collections housed in museums, archives, libraries and galleries and encourage public cultural institutions to provide online access to these collections.
- Put in place electronic legal deposit systems for artists to document and archive their work in a digital format.
- In digitization and conservation initiatives, share efforts with civil society organizations and municipal authorities, following where possible a distributed approach: the local institution can be given tools and training to digitize the materials and the Ministry of Culture can later federate the files provided by these terminals into a national consultation point.
- Ensure the availability and discoverability of local cultural projects in the digital environment, for example by creating an online directory of films, music, books, e-books, audiobooks, etc., produced by artists and CCIs from Palestine.

III) Sustainable Development: Infrastructure, Economic Viability and Digital Maturity

- Integrate cultural perspective into national ICT plans.
- Promote a fair remuneration of creators and performers in the digital environment.
- Implement measures to protect contemporary and traditional cultural expressions against piracy.
- Assess specific technological needs in order to promote geographical equity in the distribution of cultural resources, paying special attention to the challenges faced by rural areas.
- Improve the international competitiveness of local cultural industries using digital tools.
- Invite all CCIs and cultural institutions in general to develop their own digital transformation plan. This not only applies to sectors that work with digital content, but also to sectors that produce and distribute physical cultural goods, which urgently need to incorporate digital communication strategies, for example.

- Support the digital infrastructure of CCIs and cultural institutions in general, whether in terms of hardware, software or websites.
- Explore the possibility of implementing a digital maturity test for CCIs and cultural institutions in general, so that they can assess their situation in terms of digital skills, infrastructure and strategy.
- Encourage the use of innovative funding solutions among CCIs and cultural institutions in general, such as crowdfunding.
- Ensure that online payment gateways allow local users to utilize essential tools for electronic commerce.
- Devise a support strategy for the sectors that cannot be digitalized and may be under threat in the digital age.
- Promote the participation of the younger generations in the different areas of the Digital Culture strategy.
- Take into account the needs of people with disabilities.

IV) Collaborative Partnerships at the National Level

- Promote collaboration among all relevant stakeholders in the cultural field who are already operating locally in projects related to:
    - Capacity building
    - Mentorship
    - Experimentation
    - Data sharing
- Co-construct initiatives with civil society, mainly with:
    - Artists
    - CCIs
    - Creative startups
    - Tech incubators, accelerators, hubs
    - Cultural NGOs
- Foster inter-ministerial collaboration, in particular with:
    - Ministry of Education:
        - Delivery of cultural content in digital format for the younger generations.
        - Technological infrastructure in schools, for creation and consumption of digital content.
        - Dissemination of digital skills in primary and secondary schools, for both students and teachers.
        - Development of digital training courses designed for arts schools, in the areas mentioned in section I.
        - Join forces with the national E-learning plan to make sure that it incorporates the main lines of the Digital Culture strategy.
    - Ministry of Higher Education:
        - Collaboration with ICT students and graduates, for training and capacity building projects.
        - Tech incubators working with universities.
        - Faculties of Art: incorporate digital arts and digital culture in the curricula of artistic education.
    - Ministry of Telecommunications & Information Technology:
        - Tech infrastructure.
        - 4G connectivity.
    - Ministry of Entrepreneurship:
        - Training for artists and CCIs on key issues from the startup scene.
        - Incubation and acceleration of digital culture startups.
        - Create a special fund to invest in digital culture projects.
    - Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics:
        - Producing and sharing data on cultural creation and consumption in the digital environment.
- Establish a close collaboration with municipal authorities for the implementation of digital culture projects.

V) International Cooperation

- Establish a network of international cooperation agencies that can also contribute human and financial resources to activities such as:
    - Capacity building
    - Mentorship
    - Experimentation
    - Data sharing
- Exchange good practices with colleagues from other Arab countries and beyond.
- Stimulate exchange between artists, CCIs and cultural institutions in general with peers and equivalents in other countries.
- Open new communication spaces with actors from the diaspora, which not only can contribute funding for specific initiatives but can also provide know-how.
- Encourage the participation of Palestinian artists and entrepreneurs in key international networks and organizations, such as SACEM and major professional federations.
- Strengthen the cooperation of Palestinian cities with other cities in the world, in the area of digital culture. For example, good practices could be exchanged with Lyon, Guadalajara and other cities recognized by UNESCO in the field of Media Arts.
- Encourage Palestinian cultural organizations to submit digital projects to the International Fund for Cultural Diversity.
- Promote the international mobility of digital artists and creative entrepreneurs willing to take courses, network or perform abroad.

VI) Fundamental Rights: Freedom of Expression, Privacy and Gender Equality

- Promote respect for fundamental freedoms of expression, information, communication, privacy and other human rights as pre-requisites for the creation, distribution and access to diverse cultural expressions.
- Together with civil society, outline a work roadmap with large Internet platforms to fight censorship on social networks. To achieve this task, the involvement of organizations from the diaspora as well as the network of Palestinian embassies could also prove beneficial.
- Foster gender equality in the digital environment.

VII) Data

- Prepare a mapping as exhaustive as possible of the local digital culture ecosystem, including case studies and the collection of updated statistics on the production and consumption of cultural goods and services in the digital environment.
- Put systems in place to analyze and understand large quantities of cultural data.
- Assess the impact of the different components of the Digital Culture strategy (audiences reached, interactions, creation of new jobs, etc.).
- Exchange data and information with UNESCO related to challenges, opportunities and trends in the digital environment.

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Annex: Online survey

Questions

[* = Required]
Email *

1. ABOUT YOU
   - Given name *
   - Family name *
   - City *
   - Phone
   - Organization
   - Position / Role title
   - Section / Department

2. ABOUT YOUR WORK
   - 2.1. Please select the option that best describes your profile *
     - Artist
     - Researcher / Professor
     - Cultural business or institution
     - Startup / Tech company
     - Public sector
     - NGO / Non-profit
     - International cooperation agency
     - End user
     - Other:
   - 2.2. Please select the option that best describes your main area / field of work *
     - Cultural and Natural Heritage
     - Performance and celebration (including music)
     - Visual arts and crafts
     - Books and press
     - Audio-visual and interactive media
     - Design and creative services
     - Cultural education
     - Tourism
     - Sports and recreation
     - Other:

3. THE CURRENT CONTEXT
   - 3.1. Please select the options that best describe your current needs / your current organization's needs *
     - Finding financing
     - Finding business partners
     - Finding team members
     - Increasing visibility
     - Increasing scalability
     - Finding customers
     - Redefinition of current business model(s)
     - Access to innovative content
     - Other:
   - 3.2. What are the sources of your income? *
     - International aid
     - Fixed salary
     - Grants
     - Sale of cultural goods
     - Live performances
     - Crowdsourcing / donations
     - Other:

- 3.3. What of the abovementioned sources stopped or was affected during the pandemic, if any? *
- 3.4. Please select the option that best describe the impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on your income / your organization's income *
    - A dramatic (more than 30%) reduction in income
    - A moderate (less than 30%) reduction in income
    - No change in income
    - An increase in income
- 3.5. Please select the options that best describe the impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on your audience / your organization's audience *
    - A dramatic (more than 30%) reduction in audience participation
    - A moderate (less than 30%) reduction in audience participation
    - No change in audience participation
    - An increase in audience participation
- 3.6. To what extent has the Covid-19 crisis affected your artistic production?
    - Production stopped completely
    - Production was affected greatly (production was reduced by 30% - 90%)
    - Production was affected slightly (production was reduced by less than 30%)
    - The crisis did not affect your artistic production

- 3.7. How have you managed to cut down costs or find new income sources during the Covid-19 crisis?
    - Working remotely in order to reduce rent and utilities expenses
    - Cancellation of all activities
    - Downsizing
    - Reduction of salaries
    - Reduction of other operational costs
    - New sources of income
    - Other:

4. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL AGE/

- 4.1 Which technologies do you think are most promising for those working in the arts and culture sectors? *
    - Augmented reality
    - Virtual reality
    - Crowdfunding
    - E-commerce / M-commerce
    - Artificial intelligence
    - Robotics
    - Blockchain
    - IoT
    - Social Networks
    - Mobile applications
    - Web applications
    - Online galleries
    - QR Codes
    - 3D printing
    - Video games
    - Drones
    - Massive online open courses
    - Open educational resources
    - Video mapping
    - Other:
- 4.2. How do digital technologies represent an opportunity for the arts and culture sectors? *
    - They enhance the work of ministries of culture and arts councils
    - They enhance the work of libraries
    - They enhance the work of museums
    - They enhance the work of artists and cultural practitioners and entrepreneurs
    - They enable new forms of expression and artistic experimentation
    - They make it possible to broaden access to culture

- They help to increase accessibility for people with disabilities
- They encourage more efficient distribution of cultural goods and services
- They represent a new source of income for the cultural sector
- They make it possible to get to know audiences better
- They encourage participation
- They make it possible to involve young people in cultural activities
- They are a means of evading traditional censorship mechanisms
- They extend the reach of cultural policies
- They encourage intercultural dialogue
- They help to decentralize culture
- They strengthen social bonds
- They help to revive certain languages
- They stimulate employment and economic growth
- Other:

- 4.3. What are the main obstacles you have encountered in your work with digital technologies? *
  - Lack of funding
  - Lack of training
  - Lack of expert advic
  - Lack of staff
  - Lack of digital literacy and skills
  - Lack of devices on the ground
  - Lack of data
  - Lack of interoperability between operating systems
  - Lack of a comprehensive digital culture strategy at the national level
  - Failings in local technological infrastructure
  - Lack of interest on the part of users
  - Lack of interest on the part of authorities
  - Existence of a digital divide affecting part of the population
  - Digital transition is very complex for cultural institutions
  - There is so much content online that it becomes difficult to choose what to consume
  - It is not always easy to build an audience in the digital environment
  - Small companies and institutions struggle to stay visible online
  - The legal framework is not adapted to the new era
  - Other:
- 4.4. To what extent might digital technologies pose a threat?
  - They may pose a risk to the security of government information
  - They may introduce unknown risks to processes for which public agencies are responsible
  - They increase inequalities between social sectors
  - They can be used to limit freedom of expression
  - They exclude the older generations
  - Traditional cultural expressions run the risk of being forgotten
  - Many contemporary cultural expressions cannot be fully digitalized and may become marginalized if everything becomes digital
  - Libraries, museums and other institutions may lose users
  - They may pose a risk to personal privacy
  - They exacerbate economic concentration
  - They eliminate jobs
  - They threaten cultural diversity
  - They promote fake news, hate speech and discrimination/
  - They harm minority languages
  - Significant problems when it comes to protecting copyright
  - Other:

5. YOUR DIGITAL ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

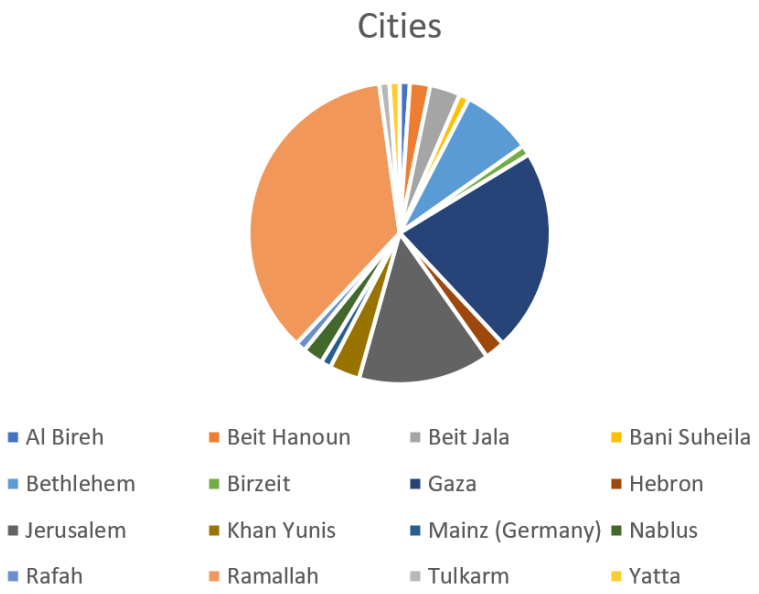
- 5.1. How informed are you or your organization about available technologies that could enhance the work in the arts and culture sectors? *
  - Very informed, and have been using the different platforms and technologies
  - I have a moderate / fair knowledge about the available technologies

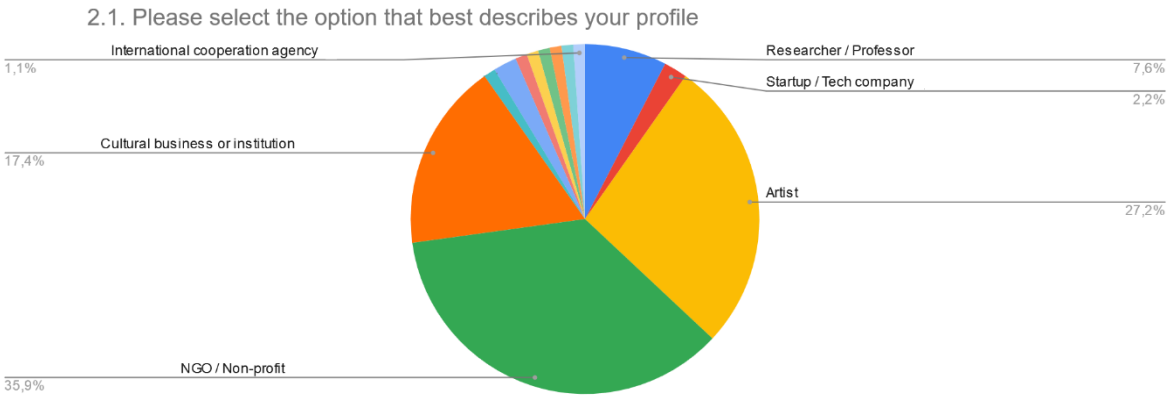
    - Not at all informed
- 5.2. What social media and digital tools do you or your organization use?
    - Facebook
    - Twitter
    - YouTube
    - Instagram
    - LinkedIn
    - Vimeo
    - Pinterest
    - Snapchat
    - WordPress
    - Flickr
    - TikTok
    - Kickstarter
    - WeChat
    - Blogs
    - Podcasts
    - Mobile apps
    - Digital archives
    - Newsletters
    - Other:
- 5.3. Please identify the most significant project that you or your organization have undertaken in relation to digital technologies between 2015 and 2019 – if any.
    - Please include elements such as: project title; launch date; target audience; objectives; results achieved; challenges faced; and any other relevant details.
- 5.4. Please identify the most significant project that you or your organization have undertaken in relation to digital technologies during the Covid-19 crisis – if any.
    - Please include elements such as: project title; launch date; target audience; objectives; results achieved; challenges faced; and any other relevant details
- 5.5. Apart from the digital initiatives that you or your organization may have carried out, are you aware of any other interesting digital project related to the arts and culture sectors in Palestine, carried out before or during the Covid-19 crisis?
    - Please include any useful information (short description, website, etc.) about the project

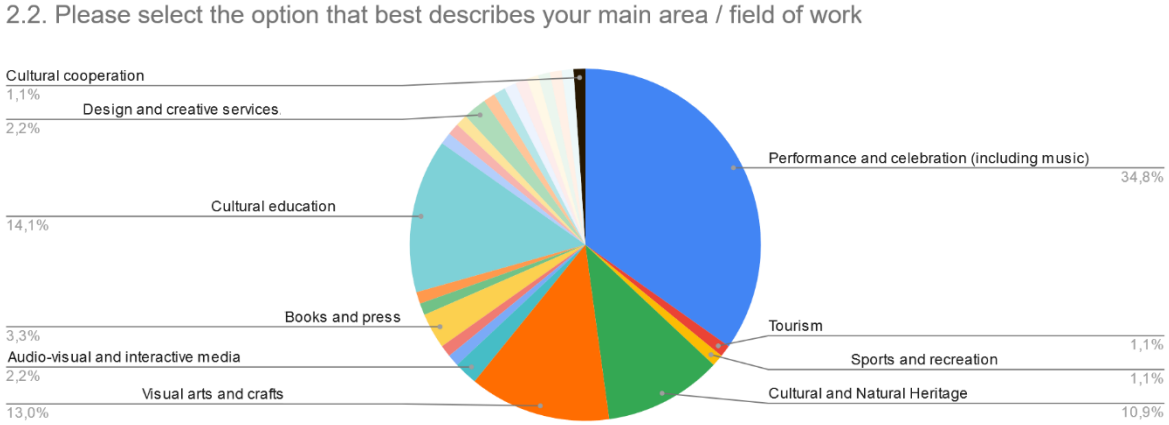
6. IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- 6.1. Based on your experience of all these digital initiatives (carried out both by you/your organization as well as other institutions, before or during the Covid-19 crisis), do you have any recommendations for institutions willing to apply digital technologies in the field of arts and culture in Palestine?
- 6.2. What new policies and initiatives could be implemented at the national and/or municipal level in Palestine using digital technologies in the arts and culture sectors, in this current Covid-19 crisis and beyond?
- 6.3. Is there any particular support related to digital technologies that you or your organization would need?
- Would you allow us to include your name among the list of respondents in our final report? *
    - Yes
    - No

Main results from the survey[79]



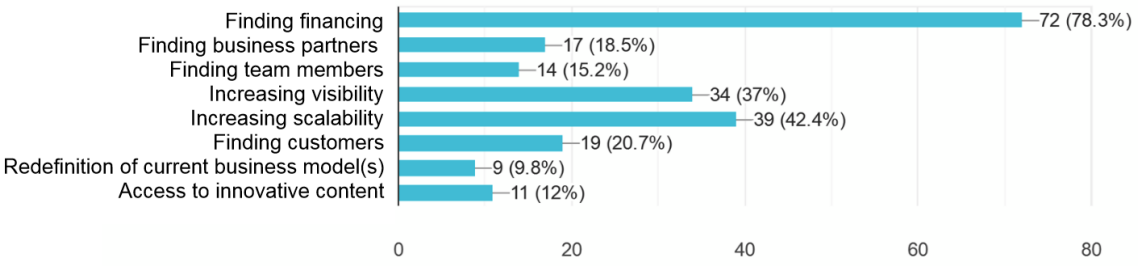




[79] In the graphics we have only included the responses that come from the standardized questionnaire. We have not incorporated the legends such as "Others", in order to simplify reading of the results.

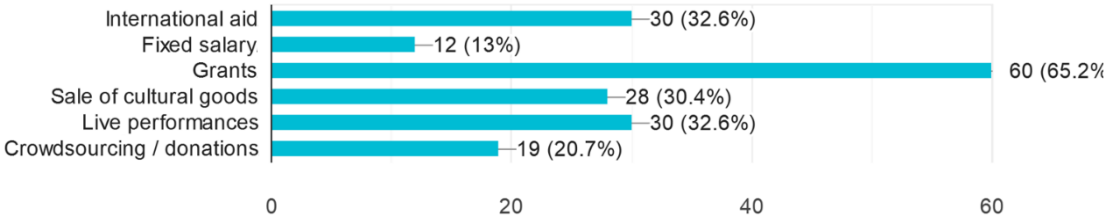
3.1. Please select the options that best describe your current needs / your current organization's needs

92 responses



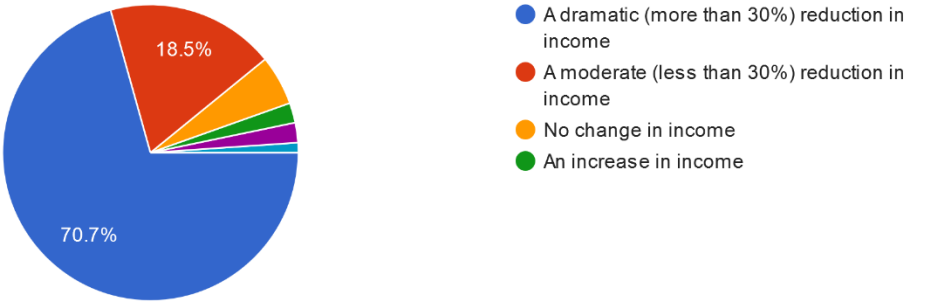
3.2. What are the sources of your income?

92 responses



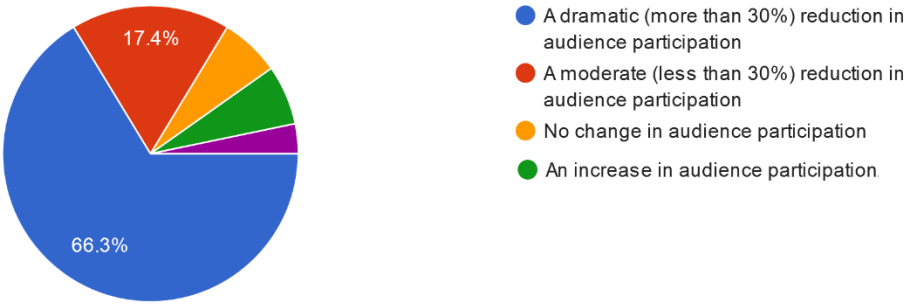
3.4. Please select the option that best describe the impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on your income / your organization's income

92 responses



3.5. Please select the options that best describe the impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on your audience / your organization's audience

92 responses

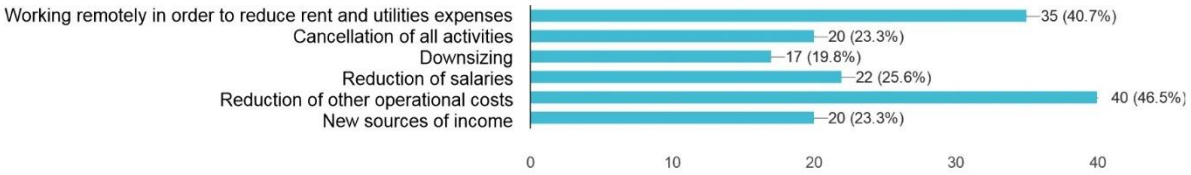


3.6. To what extent has the Covid-19 crisis affected your artistic production?

91 responses

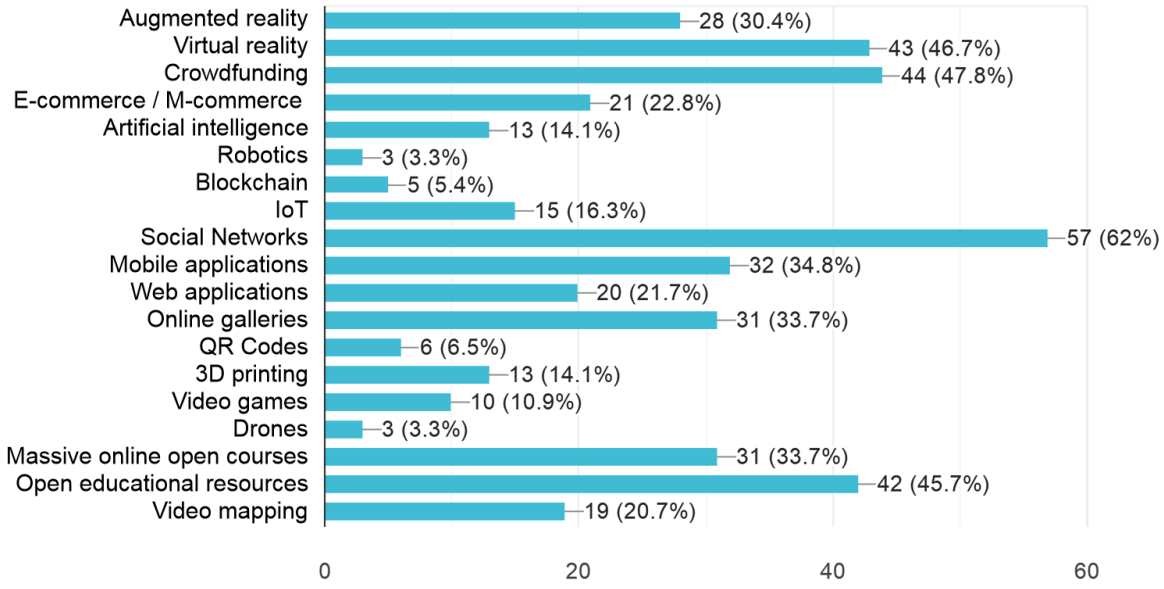
3.7. How have you managed to cut down costs or find new income sources during the Covid-19 crisis?

86 responses



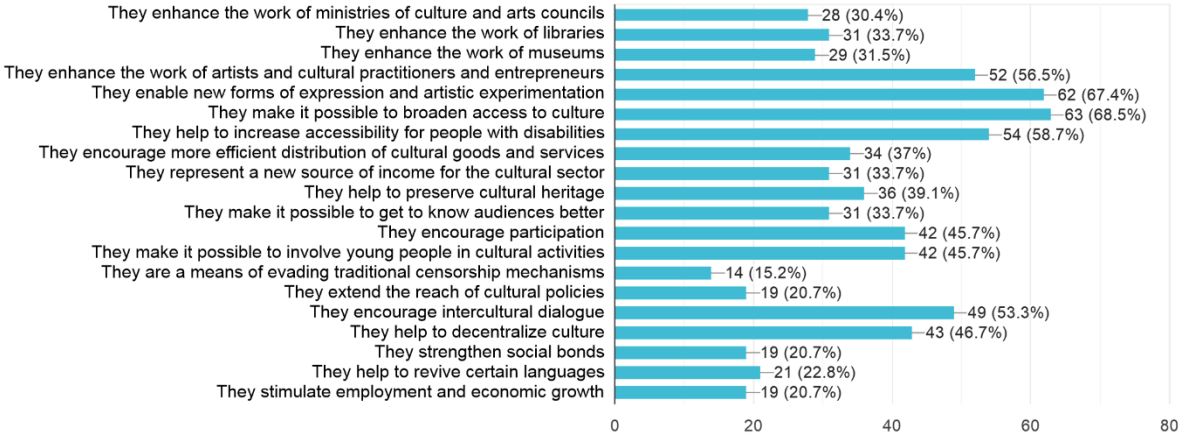
4.1 Which technologies do you think are most promising for those working in the arts and culture sectors?

92 responses



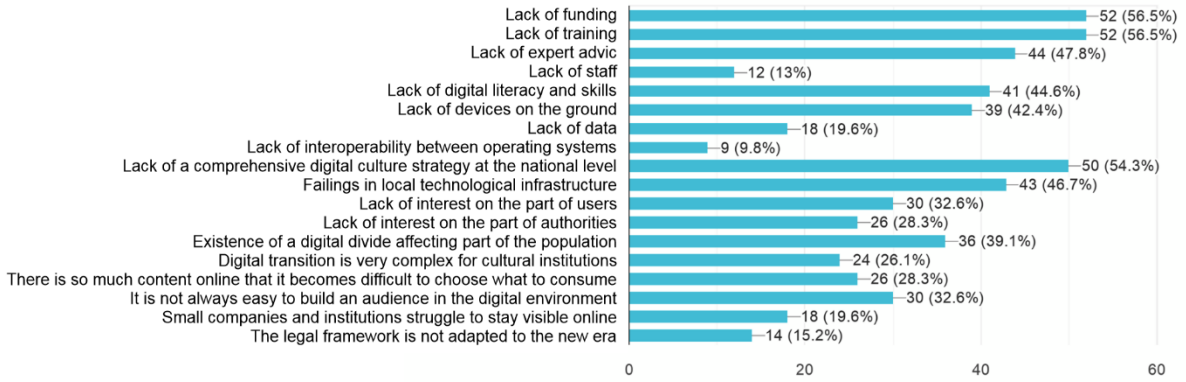
4.2. How do digital technologies represent an opportunity for the arts and culture sectors?

92 responses



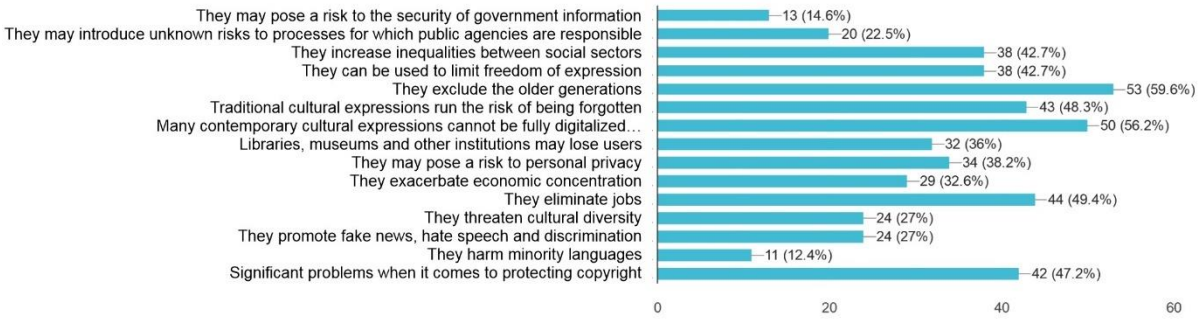
4.3. What are the main obstacles you have encountered in your work with digital technologies?

92 responses



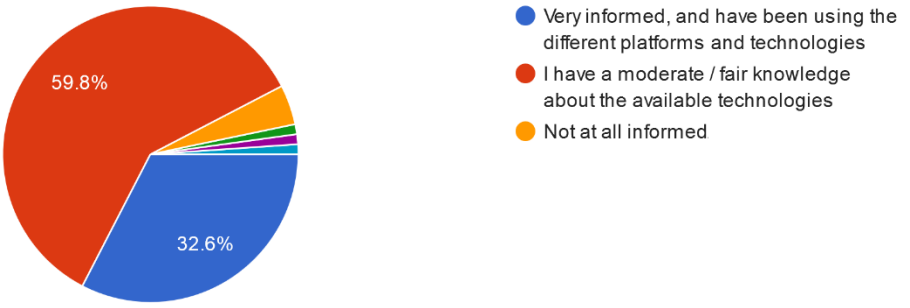
4.4. To what extent might digital technologies pose a threat?

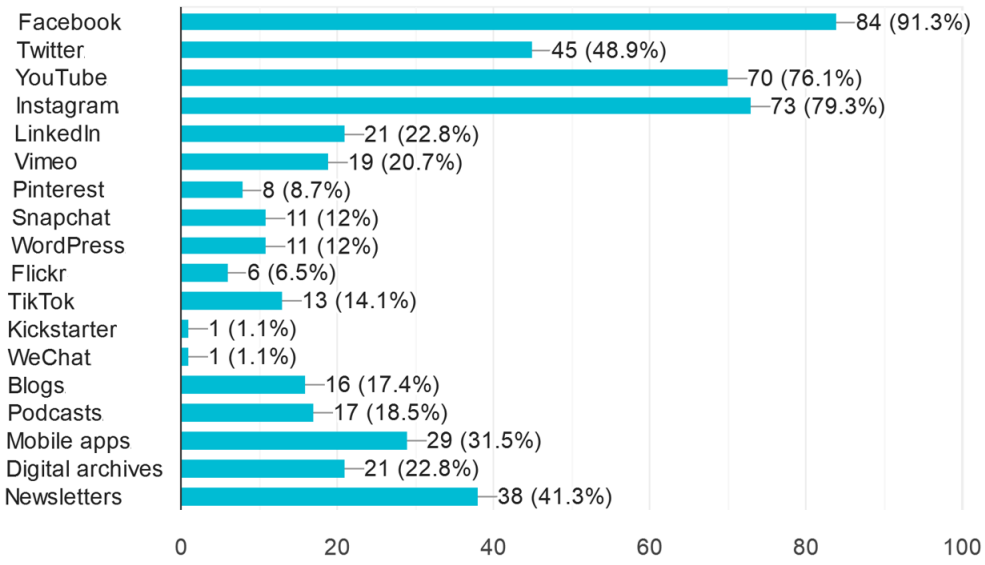
89 responses



5.1. How informed are you or your organization about available technologies that could enhance the work in the arts and culture sectors?

92 responses



5.2. What social media and digital tools do you or your organization use?

92 responses